

# **Policy for Granting of the Honorary Freedom of the Parish**

## **1. Introduction**

This document sets out the criteria, procedure and arrangements relating to the selection and appointment process for Honorary Freemen and the Granting of Freedom of the Parish to individuals.

## **2. Granting the Freedom of the Parish**

Granting the Freedom of the Parish is the highest honour that the Parish Council can bestow. Although it carries no powers, rights or privileges, those who receive the honour are able to use the title of Freeman.

As this is the highest honour that the Parish Council can grant it should be used sparingly and should not be given too often in order to preserve its status and value. The award of the Freedom of the Parish is separate to the Parish Council's Annual Community Awards.

## **3. Legislation**

3.1. Section 249 (5) of Local Government Act 1972, as amended by Section 29 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009, allows the Council of a relevant authority (including a Parish Council) to admit to be honorary freemen of the place or area for which it is the authority:

- a. Persons of distinction, and
- b. Persons who have, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent service to that place or area.

3.2. A resolution must be passed:

- a. At a meeting of the Parish Council that has been convened especially for the purpose and where notice of the object of the meeting to pass a motion relating to the granting of the award has been given; and
- b. By not less than two-thirds of the members of the Council who vote on it.

## **4. Criteria**

There is no statutory guidance that sets out any criteria for the appointment of Freemen. As the Freedom of the Parish is awarded in recognition of exceptional service to the Parish, it would be inappropriate to set out strict judging criteria.

Instead, guidance on the attributes that successful candidates would be expected to have demonstrated is outlined within this policy.

## **5. Cost**

Section 249 (9) of Local Government Act 1972 allows Councils to spend "such reasonable sum as it thinks fit" on presenting an address to a Honorary Freeman. A commemorative 'scroll' or certificate will be provided. Currently there is no budget provision for this but under the S137 of the Local Government Act 1972 the costs of the scroll and frame can be allocated.

## **6. Procedure for Granting of Freedom of Staplehurst**

6.1a. Any Parish Councillor may nominate to the Council individuals, who in their opinion, have rendered eminent services to the Parish and who should be considered to be granted the Freedom of the Parish.

6.1b. A member of the public may petition any Parish Councillor to nominate an individual to the Council individuals for consideration.

6.2. Individuals who have profited from their service would not normally be eligible, however this is subject to the discretion of the Council.

6.3. The nomination for the Honorary title will be considered at the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council. The agenda item will be discussed in private, and the public and press will be excluded. The name(s) of the individual(s) must not appear in the agenda or minutes of the meeting. The following procedure shall be adopted:

1. The Chairman shall open the agenda item and remind the Members of this Policy Document giving guidance on those criteria for suitable nominations.
2. The Chairman shall invite the Member(s) ('the sponsor) to present the application for nomination, see nomination form
3. The Member(s) of the Council making a nomination for the Honorary title should be able to demonstrate to the Council that the criteria listed in section 3.1 have been met.
4. The Chairman shall invite all Members to discuss and debate the merits of the nomination.
5. The Chairman shall then invite the Council to pass a resolution in support of convening a meeting especially for the purpose of passing a motion relating to the granting of the award.

6.4. The Chairman (or another nominated Councillor) shall prior to the issuing of the meeting calling notice for the purpose of passing a motion relating to the granting of the award, informally enquire with the proposed individual as to:

1. whether or not they are prepared to accept such an award.

2. whether they are aware of any reason that their acceptance of the award may, or could be considered by a reasonable third-party, to bring the parish or the Parish Council into disrepute.

6.5. The Parish Council will convene a meeting of the Council especially for the purpose, and where notice of the object of the meeting to pass a motion relating to the granting of the award to a specific individual(s) has been given. The following procedure shall be adopted:

1. The Chairman shall open the meeting and remind the Members of this Policy Document which gives guidance on the criteria for suitable nominations.
2. The Chairman shall invite the Member ('the sponsor') to present the application for nomination. The Member(s) of the Council making a nomination for the Honorary title should be able to demonstrate to the Council that the criteria listed in section 3.1 have been met.
3. The Chairman shall invite any members of the public who wish to speak in relation to the nomination to speak, subject to the following criteria:
  1. Council Standing Orders shall be followed
  2. each member of the public may speak for a maximum of 3 minutes, and whom may speak only once during the meeting
  3. members of Council may ask questions (with the agreement of the Chairman), to the member of the public who is speaking, however, questions to the member of the public who is speaking, from other members of the public are not permitted.
4. The public and any press shall then be excluded from the meeting.
5. The Chairman shall invite all Councillors present to discuss and debate the merits of the nomination.
6. The public and any press shall then be invited to return for the remainder of the meeting.
7. The Chairman shall then invite the Council to pass a resolution granting the award, which should recite the particular grounds and details of the public services rendered by the potential recipient.
8. If the Council passes the resolution by no less than a 2/3rds majority then the resolution shall be recorded in the Council Minutes in the usual way.

6.6. If the motion is passed, the Chairman in consultation with the Parish Clerk shall then make arrangements for the formal presentation of the 'Freedom' which will be marked by the giving of a framed certificate, in line with the following:

1. Albeit that the bestowing of the Freedom of the Parish actually occurs at the point the Parish Council resolves to grant the Freedom, the presentation ceremony marks the occasion in a public and dignified way.
2. It is expected that the occasion for the presentation ceremony shall be sufficiently prominent and visible to members of the public, for example at the annual Parish assembly, village fete or another public event.
3. The presentation would usually be made by the Parish Council Chairman with other Councillors present.

4. Following the presentation, an opportunity should be provided for the recipient to reply.
5. After the formal proceedings come to an end it will be usual to adjourn for a reception. This gives an opportunity for the public and invited guests to offer their congratulations to the newly appointed Honorary Freeman of the Parish
6. Photographs should be taken to record both events and placed on the Parish Council website and within the Council's archive.

6.7. The roll of Honorary Freemen shall be maintained by the Parish Clerk and shall be publicly displayed.

This Policy supersedes any former Honorary Freedom of the Parish Policy and was adopted by Staplehurst Parish Council on

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